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CS 640 Sociology of Religion

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July 2005

Sociology of Religion

Asbury Theological Seminary

CS 640 / MB 760: 3 hours

Summer I July 11-14, 2005

SH 408

8:00 am – 6:00 pm

(39 contact hours; fieldtrips may alter schedule slightly)

Dr. James R. Thobaben

Office Location: McPheeters Center 307

Office Phone: 858-2369

Office Hours: By appointment during summer.

Purpose:

The course in Sociology of Religion is designed to prepare students for ministry by training them to analyze the structure, function, role, and interpretation of religion in society at the beginning of the twenty-first century and the likely forms of religion for the immediate future.

Students are introduced to classical and contemporary sociological interpretations of religion, taught the vocabulary of the sociology of religion, and introduced to qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The course should be understood as complementing courses in the psychology of religion, evangelism (church growth), church history, cultural anthropology, folk religion, and social ethics.

The primary emphasis throughout the course will be on Christianity, specifically in the North American forms (including various ethnic groups). References to other religions and to non-Western expressions of Christianity are included to facilitate integration of the Sociology of Religion material with material from other courses.

Objectives:

As a course that serves to meet the "Understanding the World" requirement for Formation, Mission, and Cultural Context, students in Sociology of Religion prepare for ministry both within and from the church by (the objectives in bold & italicized are particular foci of this course):

- Establishing a life of inward and outward, individual and corporate spiritual disciplines as means for deepening their relationship with Jesus Christ, and nourishing the life of the faith community;
- ***Integrating their understanding of God's call to ministry with their vocational development, their personal spiritual formation, and their spiritual and moral identity;***
- ***Exhibiting basic skill in social analysis and social ministry (including cross-culturally);***
- ***Developing and understanding tools and skills for identifying and assessing individual, congregational, and community spiritual and moral needs;***
- Demonstrating commitment to ongoing spiritual formation and reflection, with appropriate expressions in personal integrity and corporate and social holiness;
- ***Demonstrating knowledge of how the church is expressed in diverse communities throughout the world.***

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Specifically, students who complete the Sociology of Religion course will:

- 1) be familiar with the basic language sociology of religion;
- 2) be capable of using the tools of sociology of religion for research and critiquing research of religion;
- 3) be capable of analyzing the general role of religious communities, at local, regional, national, and international levels;
- 4) be able to recognize how congregational life is partially shaped by broader social, cultural, and economic factors;
- 5) be capable of analyzing the form and function of religious organizations;
- 6) be capable of analyzing the commitment mechanisms, organizational structure, and world-view of religious communities;
- 7) be better able to adopt specific tools of sociology of religion to their ministry (for church growth, evangelism, social service ministries, etc.);
- 8) by becoming familiar with "a-spiritual" explanations of religious behavior, be better able to explain Christianity and the activity of the church in public forums.

Texts:

- ❖ Virkler, Henry A., A Christian's Guide to Critical Thinking [read Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6 & 7]
- ❖ McGuire, Meredith B., Religion: The Social Context [read entire book]
- ❖ Kivisto, Peter, Social Theory: Roots & Branches [read all *except* skim Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 15, 17, 20, 25, 28, 29, 32, 33, 35, 36, 41, 43, 45, 52, 54, 58, 59, 65, 68, 69]
- ❖ Stark & Finke, Acts of Faith [read entire book]
- ❖ Thobaben, James R. "Ecclesiology & Covenant: Christian Social Institutions in a Pluralistic Setting" (available on closed reserve)

NOTE: *This course is taught as an intensive. Think of it as a one-month course, with the class work taking one week. Students who read all or almost all of the material before class (even if sections are not clearly understood) will get much more from the actual class sessions. Also, the exam and paper are scheduled for after the conclusion of the in-class meetings.*

Evaluation:

- 10% Article analysis paper (≈ 2 1/2 pages)
- 10% Compare and contrast structure OR Conversion paper (≈ 2 1/2 pages)
- 10% Seminar presentation (≈ 15 minutes)
- 30% Final exam (≈ 40 minutes)
- 40% Final paper (≈ 20 pages)

1) Analyze two research articles related to your selected religious group (at least one should have some statistics, even if only in the simplest form). Critique the use of statistics and qualitative techniques. Describe the relation between the assumptions (named and unnamed) and the conclusions reached by the authors. Consider how your selected group is compared to other religious (or social) communities and/or organizations. You DO NOT need to explain the actual mathematics involved, only the research methods used. Though not required, it would make the entire process easier if the student selected the articles prior to beginning classroom meetings; consult professor with any questions. DUE IN CLASS ON TUESDAY.

2) Compare and contrast the religious structures and functions of your selected religious group and one other. Examine formal and informal structures and the function(s) of the religious group in its social setting. Include a brief consideration of how these expressions may "play out" in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. DUE IN CLASS ON THURSDAY.

OR

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Compare and contrast the concept of conversion in your selected religious group and one other. In the analysis look at the individual experience and the associated ecclesiologies. Focusing on your selected religious group, explain how conversion is a social expression in the respective communities and how it may or may not encourage long-term commitment. DUE IN CLASS ON THURSDAY.

3) Seminar presentation. Provide an over-view of your selected religious group to the rest of the class. This is an informal presentation (about 12 - 15 minutes). Students are encouraged to use "visual aids" if helpful in conveying the values, structure, understanding of conversion, etc. of the studied group (but **MUST** be concise; **MUST** be within time limit; use "passouts" if additional material needs to be conveyed to class.). PRESENT IN CLASS ON THURSDAY.

4) Final exam. The final is an objective exam on terms and general concepts. The exam will take 45 - 60 minutes. TO BE SCHEDULED (during the week after the conclusion of class; exam format to be determined).

5) Final paper. A 20 - 25 page paper on the sociology of the selected religious group. The paper should include consideration of internal structure and relationship of the group with the broader community (if a Christian or marginal Christian group, remember to distinguish relations with other Christian groups and non-Christians). DUE THURSDAY AUGUST 1 AT 9:00 AM .

The paper may be structured as the student wishes. It is important, however, that the paper be a paper on the sociology of religion. So, for instance, if one studies Jehovah's Witnesses, then a brief discussion of the heretical, Arian-like theology is appropriate, but the paper should not dwell on this. Rather, there should be a discussion of the evangelism, meeting participation, the social classes that seem most attracted, etc. and how the theology relates to these (reinforces, explains, etc.). Likewise, if discussing a group like Scientology, though there should be some discussion of the psychological needs of persons joining, the entire paper should not be on the need for counseling those who leave the group, but should include consideration of structure, cultural location, etc.

Participation: Students are required to complete all assigned readings on time. The readings should be read by the day noted on the syllabus, but students would be well-served by reading all the material prior to the beginning of class sessions (remember, this is a one-month course with sessions for one week). Failure to participate in class will result in a lowering of the final grade. As required by ATS, attendance will be taken. The deduction for low participation and/or late or incomplete reading of assigned material will be up to 10% against the final grade (a full letter grade reduction).

A few notes on papers:

Proofread, proofread, proofread --- and have someone else proofread (if English is not your first language, you may want to have a native speaker proofread for grammar and flow). Look for clarity in the structure and precision in statements. Do not misspell words. Do use resources (those provided and additional ones for theory; your own for your selected religious group). Use and cite original sources.

Do not plagiarize. If you take a quote or **even an idea that is new to you** from a source, then give credit in a footnote or endnote.

All written work must be typed with 12-point type, one-inch margins on all four sides, and true double-spacing.

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All written work must use inclusive language when reference is made to human beings (male and female). This provides for both greater inclusion and greater precision. For more information on this topic see 'Suggestions for Using Inclusive Language', available from the Dean.

There will be a penalty for late papers commensurate with the degree of lateness and the adequacy of the excuse.

Grade Range: Work for CS 640 / MB 760 will be evaluated at a graduate/professional school level (approved scale of ATS School of Theology).

<i>A</i>	=	<i>Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objective</i>
<i>A-</i>	=	
<i>B+</i>	=	
<i>B</i>	=	<i>Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives</i>
<i>B-</i>	=	
<i>C+</i>	=	
<i>C</i>	=	<i>Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives</i>
<i>C-</i>	=	
<i>D+</i>	=	
<i>D</i>	=	<i>Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives</i>
<i>D-</i>	=	
<i>F</i>	=	<i>Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives</i>

COURSE SCHEDULE

BEFORE THE FIRST CLASS SESSION (some time during the month before class; preferably within two weeks of sessions beginning) -- *Attend a worship service that is distinctly different than your own tradition (e.g. a different ethnic group, a very different worship style, a very different economic class or geographic location; for instance, this might be a Pentecostal church, a highly liturgical Catholic service, a Jewish service, a Unitarian meeting, a Mormon service, etc.). Take notes during (discreetly) or after (if more appropriate) so the experience can be described. Include your "feelings," things that were similar or very dissimilar to your own tradition, how people participated, how the leader led, etc. No paper will be turned in on this, but it will be very helpful for our discussion on the first day. See McGuire, 327- 334 "Conducting Field Research."*

READINGS & SESSION THEMES (Note: "SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS" include some classic pieces on the sociology of religion and some that would be helpful in understanding the topics discussed; they are not required for M. Div. students. MB 760 students must negotiate with the professor for primary readings drawn from the Supplementary Readings in order to have the course satisfy the expectations for a doctoral level course; in addition, MB 760 students must meet with the professor and agree on additional writing requirements.)

COMPLETE REQUIRED READING BEFORE FIRST CLASS SESSION:

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS ARE NOT REQUIRED

DAY 1 Morning

Overview of course

Introduction to course

Introduction to terms & tools

Introduction to sociological research language

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS (NOT REQUIRED; USEFUL FOR RESEARCH)

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Glossary on Reserve

Virkler, Henry A. "Principles of Experimental Design" & "Principles of Statistical Analysis," A Christian's Guide to Critical Thinking

Afternoon The Origins of Religion, Culture & Society

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS (NOT REQUIRED; USEFUL FOR RESEARCH)

Weber, Max "The Rise of Religions" The Sociology of Religion

Malinowski, Bronislaw, Magic, Science & Religion

Durkheim, Emile, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life

Bellah, Robert "Religious Evolution" Beyond Belief

Berger, Peter, Sacred Canopy

Geertz, Clifford "Religion as a Cultural System" The Interpretation of Cultures

Habermas, Jurgen, Theory of Communicative Action

Douglas, Mary "Abominations of Leviticus" Purity & Danger

DAY 2 Morning Sociology of Individual Religious Belief

Paper # 1 due in class

***FIELD TRIP TO CANE RIDGE; DEPART AT 7:45 am;
Must arrange rides with peers or be at Cane Ridge at 9:30
PROMPTLY!***

Do not plan to be back for 12 noon lunch.

Donation of \$5 is appropriate.

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS (NOT REQUIRED; USEFUL FOR RESEARCH)

Freud, Sigmund, The Future of an Illusion

Freud, Sigmund, Civilization & Its Discontents

**Weber, Max "Priests and Prophets" Sociology of Religion*

James, William, Varieties of Religious Experience

Fowler, James, "Stages of Faith and Adults' Life Cycles"

**Gilligan, Carol In a Different Voice*

Lester, Toby "Oh, Gods!" Atlantic Monthly

Roof, Wade Clark, Spiritual Marketplace

Heirich, Max "Change of Heart: A Test of Some Widely Held Theories about Religious Conversion"

Lofland & Skonovd "Conversion Motifs"

Rhodes, Steve "Conversion as Crisis and Process"

Lofland & Stark "Becoming a World Saver"

Afternoon Sociology of Religion, Politics, and Economics

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS (NOT REQUIRED; USEFUL FOR RESEARCH)

Weber, Max, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

Parsons, Talcott "The Religious Legitimation of Secular Societies" The Evolution of Societies

Tawney, R.H. Religion and the Rise of Capitalism

Marx, Karl "Estranged Labor" Economic and Philosophic

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Manuscripts of 1844

Engels, Frederick, Socialism: Utopian & Scientific

Pope, Liston, Millhands & Preachers

Sennett, Richard, The Fall of Public Man

Grimke, Sarah, "Letter on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman"

DuBois, W.E.B. Souls of Black Folks

DAY 3 Morning Sociology of Distinct Religious Communities

FIELD TRIP TO SHAKER VILLAGE

**Must arrange rides with peers or
be at Shaker Village at determined time.**

**Do not plan to be back for 12 noon lunch.
Cost is \$6.**

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS (NOT REQUIRED; USEFUL FOR RESEARCH)

Tipton, Steven "The Moral Logic of Alternative Religions"

Murray, John E. "Determinants of Membership Levels and Duration in
A Shaker Commune, 1780-1880" Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion
(34:1, 35-48)

Nordhoff, Charles, "The Shakers" (pp. 117-256) & "The Perfectionists of
Oneida and Wallingford" (pp 259-301) The Communistic Societies of
the United States

Afternoon Sociology of Leadership & Community Identity

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS (NOT REQUIRED; USEFUL FOR RESEARCH)

Bellah, Robert "Civil Religion" Beyond Belief

Troeltsch, Ernst, The Social Teachings of the
Christian Church

Niebuhr, H. Richard, Social Sources of Denominationalism

Schaller, Lyle, Tattered Trust

DAY 4 Morning Student Presentations

Paper # 2 due in class

Afternoon The End of Modernity, the Restructuring of Religion & Implications for Ministry

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS (NOT REQUIRED; USEFUL FOR RESEARCH)

Trueheart, Charles, "The Next Church" Atlantic Monthly

Parrot & Perrin, "The New Denominations" Christianity Today
"Pentecostals" Christianity Today

Alvarez, Carmelo, "Hispanic Pentecostals: Azusa Street and Beyond"
Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research

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McRoberts, Omar M. "Understanding the 'New' Black Pentecostal Activism: Lessons from Ecumenical Urban Ministries in Boston" Sociology of Religion Spring 1999.

Hunter, James Davidson, Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America

Lippy, Charles H., "Pluralism & American Religious Life in the Later Twentieth Century," Perspectives on American Religion & Culture (ed. Peter W. Williams)

Wakely, J.B. Lost Chapters Recovered of Early History of American Methodism